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THE INDIGENOUS FOUNDATIONS OF CULTURE: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

Sol Tax[1]

[We are honored to be able to reprint in this issue the article of so distinguished an anthropologist as Prof. Sol Tax, chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago. His survey of Latin American culture areas and trends will of course be of immediate and "practical" interest to readers particularly interested in that area, but should not be overlooked by other readers as well. Indigenous foundations and the development of new cultures through contact with the West are phenomena which exist everywhere. Extra copies of this issue have been printed, and are available at the usual price for back copies.--Ed.]

If I am to speak as an anthropologist, you will understand that I take the term "culture" to be used here in the general or anthropological sense. Thus, "Latin American Culture" does not refer alone to the art, music, literature, and philosophy of the hemisphere, but rather to the ways of life of all of the peoples of Latin America. From this point of view there is not one culture but many. There are the village cultures, the regional and national cultures, the class cultures; there are the cultures of Indian tribes, of peasantries, of industrial cities. There are the ways of life of the wealthy landowners who have gone to France to live, and of the missionaries from the United States who live in mountain villages and translate the Bible into Indian languages.

It is possible to conceptualize also a single Latin American culture of which all or most of these - and many others - are parts. You may imagine, if you wish, a characteristic Latin American way of looking at things, different from a North American, or Spanish, or Chinese, or African way of looking at things. Then you would say that this culture is a compound of, or a distillation from, or possibly a selection from, all of the cultures that have occupied the territory. First of all, there

were the Indians - a thousand varieties of Indians; then the Europeans - the soldiers, the priests, the colonists; and with them books and the knowledge of all the continents; and then more people from all over the world, and machines and products of machines. Out of all this, you would say, has come an identifiable Latin American culture. Then the question arises, what has been the part played by each of the cultures in the making of the whole. Specifically - and this is the problem that is posed for us on the program - what did the pre-Columbian Americans contribute. What are the indigenous foundations of Latin American culture.

It seems to me that the first item on any agenda toward an understanding of Latin America is to question the usefulness of speaking of a single culture. A single culture implies a single society which shares a single basic set of values. The Indian in the village and the professor in the University are graded on a single scale. The professor thinks of the culture as a pyramid, with a broad base in folk cultures and the University at the summit, which becomes somehow associated with man's destiny and the highest good. What has each culture, what has every man, contributed to the whole? is a question which is interpreted to read, What part of the cultures of the folk has risen to the top, like cream, to leave the milk, by contrast, watery and thin?

From the point of view of the Indian in the village, on the other hand, there are different ways of life - that of the University, perhaps, and that of the village. And the anthropologist also generally sees it this way. Which is more or less, or better or worse, may be relevant questions but imply values and judgments on which we need not agree; we can agree that the superiority or inferiority of one or another ought not simply be assumed in the statement of a problem.

Let us imagine, then, on the contrary, that we have a congeries of cultures in Latin America, interrelated in complex ways, but also genuine and distinct entities.

They can be analyzed and classified; one can talk about Mestizo or Indian culture over a smaller or larger area; or possibly about some characteristics of Mexican or Brazilian culture. But any of these concepts then become end points - commonalties discovered - rather than beginning points to be assumed and explained.

Viewed in this light, it is still possible to speak of Latin America and the contributions to its culture of the Indian cultures in the same way as one speaks of a garden as an entity and of the place in it which the peonies or the lilacs play. The Indians are not to be judged by what they have contributed to some culture other than their own; Indian cultures like all the others are justified by their existence. Indians are so important in Latin America - demographically at the very least - that Latin America would be radically different without them. This is quite different from saying that Indian culture has contributed chocolate and potatoes and tomatoes and corn and llamas and the host of material and non-material traits adopted by the rest of the world. Indians like all other peoples have added their share to the common pot of world culture. Many other things - perhaps equally or more important - are not transferable, and are "added to the pot" only by means of the fact that Indians are part of the pot, the same as other peoples, and their cultures are in it, so to speak, from the beginning. Europeans sometimes seem to assume that they are charter members of the human race, to whose stream of culture other peoples can be said to contribute. This is part of a disposition we have to count as cultural contributions only the parts of culture that are detachable, so to speak, and borrowed by others. I am stating here that the whole heritage of every people is a full part of the whole human heritage; and a large part of the culture of Latin America is comprised by Indian cultures. I turn now to a description of these Indian cultures.

The first point to be emphasized is that at the time Columbus discovered America there were tremendous

differences among Indian groups. The Indians had come over from Asia in small groups beginning ten or twenty thousand years ago. They presumably had somewhat generalized cultures with a great potential for differentiation and elaboration. As they spread over the Americas they responded to the tremendous variety of geographic and social situations with a kaleidoscopic cultural variety that is a constant marvel. Of languages, for example, there developed at least two thousand and it is difficult to classify them into fewer than - say - 150 families. With respect to other elements of culture, the variety is no less. Clearly, this paper is no place to describe the cultural heritages of the Indians of Latin America. There are several sources to which one can go for such descriptions[2]. For any serious idea of the native cultures in Latin America - or the indigenous foundations - one needs to go to these. What I can say in this short space is little outline, indeed.

For all the thousands of cultures that were discernible at the time of first European contact, anthropologists are now satisfied to divide them into a half dozen large culture areas.

1. The Greater Southwest includes northern Mexico and also our own Southwest. It would all have been part of Latin America if most of it had not been annexed - relatively recently - by the United States. Because so little of it is now a part of Latin America, I say little about it here, merely mentioning that at the time of the Conquest it included a wide variety of tribal groups - the Navajos, the Pueblos, the Huichols and so forth. Many of these still exist, practicing their distinctive cultures.

2. Mesoamerica to the south included about three million people in Central and Southern Mexico, the Yucatan Peninsula, El Salvador, Guatemala, and parts of Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Among the many tribes of the region at least two, the Aztecs of Mexico and the Maya of Yucatan, had developed what we think of

as high civilizations. Both had hieroglyphic writing, complex political and religious systems, and great art and science.

The Aztecs in Mexico based their civilization on intensive maize agriculture, which made possible the development of cities. The society which centered around these cities and their temples was rigidly stratified; at the bottom of the social pyramid were the commoners, and at its apex, the priests. The temple cult was fundamental to Aztec life. Since the rites of the temple required frequent sacrifices of war prisoners, warfare was common, and the warrior had high prestige. The outlying peoples thus conquered were forced to bring tribute to the Aztec rulers, but were never welded into an integrated empire.

The Maya of Yucatan, in contrast, practiced slash-and-burn agriculture; the cornfields cleared in the jungle were abandoned when they lost fertility, and new patches cleared. This system of shifting cultivation, involving gradual shifts in habitation, prevented the development of true cities. Instead, the Maya built huge, monumental city ceremonial centers, populated largely by priests, around which the rest of the people were strung for many miles in every direction. Maya society was not oriented toward war; conquest, tribute-taking, and a warrior class were foreign to their way of life. The Maya priests, who had the highest status in the society, developed art, architecture and calendrical systems to a high degree of sophistication.

3. The people of the tropical forests and southern Andes, numbering somewhat over two million, were scattered over a tremendous rain forest area, primarily the vast Amazon river drainage, and spilling over into the southern Andes. These forest peoples lived in semi-permanent villages, around which they carried on slash-and-burn cultivation of such crops as bitter manioc, yams, arrowroot, beans, squash and taro; the villages were moved every generation or so when the soil around

ceased to be productive. Hunting and fishing were also important activities. Characteristically, each village was an independent unit, with no political allegiance to any other. Within the village, the main unit was the extended family or lineage. Where the village consisted of a single such family group, the village head was merely the family head; some multi-family villages had a hereditary chief, of limited powers, who was often also a shaman. Religious activities were often centered in the shaman, whose main functions were to cure sickness, to prognosticate, and to perform magic. Warfare was carried on to obtain human trophies and victims for cannibalistic feasts - not for conquest.

The tribes of the southern Andes, inhabitants of the northern edge of Chile and a small slice of northwest Argentina, were much like the peoples of the tropical forest, except that they had taken over many techniques from the more "civilized" peoples of the central Andes. They lived in widely separated villages, fortified for defense since warfare was continual in the area, and practiced intensive farming of corn, beans, quinoa and potatoes. They also raised llama and guinea pigs, and wove cloth in wool and cotton.

4. The Circum-caribbean and Sub-Andean peoples of northern South and Central America and the Antilles numbered a little over a million village-dwelling farmers. Although intensive agriculture was the main basis of the economy, along the coasts and in the Antilles the ocean was an important source of livelihood. The technology of these peoples included many items - like pottery, woven basketry, hammocks, thatch houses - characteristic of the tropical forests, and others - such as the use of metals, salt, the raising of guinea pigs - which were typical of the people of the high Andes. They produced enough material goods to allow local specialization and trade in such items as metals, salt, cloth, and beads. They lived in permanent villages, which usually consisted of several extended family or lineage groups. Bonds between these kin groups were

reinforced by strong political controls, as society was characteristically divided into somewhat fluid classes. A group of hereditary chiefs constituted the upper class; nobility in general seems to have developed from an earlier class of warriors. Shaman-priests performed religious rites in local temples, celebrating the powers of tribal gods. Many of the tribes entered into multi-community states through federation and conquest, but none of these ever became completely consolidated like the state of the Inca in the high Andes.

The sub-Andean peoples differ from this general pattern largely in their greater approximation to central Andean culture - i.e. in such items as copper smelting, and construction of roads, stone houses, forts and bridges.

5. The Central Andes are fully comparable to Mesoamerica in complexity and general cultural achievement. A population of more than 4-1/2 millions lived in this thin strip of high mountain country, stretching from Columbia 2,000 miles south along the Andes to Ecuador. Intensive farming and herding supported the densest population and the largest and most permanent communities in South America. This population was integrated by a most efficient administrative system, and produced some remarkable technological achievements; in many respects this people out-did the Romans. The attainment of agricultural surpluses coupled with the construction of an elaborate system of roads and communications, permitted the growth of truly urban centers. A strong centralized government developed, which replaced traditional tribal custom by a complex code of laws and regulations enforced through a judicial system. Religion was organized around a state temple cult, served by a graded priesthood. Social classes became hereditary, endogamous castes; high caste nobles took part in government and religious affairs while commoners tilled the soil or engaged in manufactures. Warfare was an implement of imperialist conquest, rather than a source of slaves and ritual victims. In greatest contrast are

6. The marginal peoples, a term referring to clumps of tribes widely scattered over different areas of South America. They include small tribal groups in the Chaco and in the interior forests of Brazil; shellfish gatherers of Chile; hunters of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. Their cultures differed greatly one from another; what they had in common was that they were all peoples of simple technology and rudimentary social organization; all told, they numbered some three-quarters of a million people. They lived chiefly by hunting and gathering, although some of the northern groups practiced a limited and not very efficient agriculture. Mostly these were nomadic bands, made up of a single kinship group or of several unrelated families or clans. Lineage groups were rarely larger than sixty persons; chiefs or formal government were usually lacking. With subsistence depending on the availability of wild foods, their life was materially meagre. What elaborations their cultures were able to develop had to be those possible under conditions of nomadism and simple technology; they were chiefly in the fields of personal adornment, dances, songs and games. Religion generally laid great stress on shamanism and magic. Warfare was unorganized and typically defensive.

It is worth noting that these various areas differed from one another not only in the way of life of their peoples, but in the density of their populations. At one extreme, the marginal tribes of southern Argentina and Chile had exceedingly sparse populations - under nine persons per hundred square kilometers - and naturally so, because of their nomadism and their subsistence on widely scattered wild foods. At the other extreme, the two areas of high civilization - Mesoamerica, and the Central Andes - had relatively dense populations, supported by intensive agriculture. We suppose that in the Central Andes population density was about 720 persons per hundred square kilometers and in Mesoamerica 300. In between were the tropical forest areas, with a density of something like ten to fifty persons per hundred square kilometers, and the circum-Caribbean area with a wide range including West Indian

islands with densities over 500. Density of population, then, was closely correlated with cultural complexity, and with the development of political systems integrating larger numbers of people.

These, then, were the cultures in America when the Spaniards and the Portuguese began their conquests, their colonization, their Christianization. This is the situation to which the European was brought - Indians all over the New World, but with cultures as widely divergent as could be. Let us turn now to what happened to the Indians of this area in 450 years.

The first thing to say is that, no matter how they are counted, the Indians are very much with us. The best estimates of the pre-Columbian population fix it at about 14 million. Today there are about 7 million. These 7 million are all counted as Indians in governmental censuses; thus they are all socially recognized as Indians. Almost all of them live in communities in which they maintain in greater or less degree, Indian ways of life. There are others who are Indian in descent and who maintain a good part of their Indian culture who are not counted as Indians. But let us settle for the 7 million. Any notion that Indians have disappeared or are on the verge of disappearing is wholly wrong. I believe this is true also in North America, where the population of Indians in Indian communities is probably now actually on the increase. But we are concerned here only with Latin America. In Latin America the continuing presence of the Indian is a self-apparent fact.

The second thing that needs to be said is that the Indians have fared differently in different parts of the area. Here I turn to an important contribution made by Elman Service in a recent issue of the American Anthropologist[3]. This article offers us an illuminating interpretation of what has happened.

Service divides all of Latin America into three situations. The first is Indo-America, mainly in the

Andes and in Mexico and Guatemala. Specifically, it includes central and southern Mexico, Guatemala, the highlands of Colombia, and Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. In this area live perhaps 5-1/2 million people who are counted as Indians (compared to 9 or 10 millions in the same territory before the Conquest). In most of these areas Indians are the overwhelming majority of the population. Western Guatemala and adjacent Chiapas, for example, are over 90 per cent Indian.

I need hardly point out that Indo-America today coincides pretty largely with the areas of the large civilizations of pre-Columbian times. The Spaniards came in and replaced the Indian central organization - religious and political - with their own bureaucracy. But the Indians stayed put, and were exploited, so to speak, as Indians.

Second, there is Euro-America, which coincides pretty well with the old "marginal" areas. Here the Indian population was originally sparse, and it was tribal. As in North America, the Indians could not or would not be exploited directly, and were, in effect, pushed aside. There, their organization in small family groups and bands saved them. They remain as small tribal groups in the hinterland.

Thus in Indo-America the Indians remain surprisingly in the pre-Conquest pattern because there were so many and they could be used more or less as they were, while in Euro-America the Indians also remain surprisingly in their pre-Conquest pattern because there were so few and they could not be used.

Now we come to Mestizo-America, the area in which Service argues the Indians have generally disappeared or acculturated. This area coincides pretty largely with the circum-Caribbean and the tropical forest areas. Service shows how the Europeans here in effect destroyed the native cultures because these Indians, unlike marginals, were settled in villages and had no place to run

to, but unlike the civilized nations such as the Inca did not have an immovable and irresistible mass.

I like Service's description and interpretation, and commend it to your attention. I do take issue on one point: It seems to me that the Indians of Mestizo-America are much more with us than he indicates. In this area there are about 1,200,000 Indians, or some 17 per cent of the total. This is a sizeable number of persons still identifiable as Indians and in large part carrying Indian cultures. There are a half million in Brazil alone, and this is 11 per cent of the population. Mestizo-America should not, therefore, be defined as lacking in Indians, but simply as an area in which the Indians are in a minority, but in which the majority is not European in ancestry and culture - as in Euro-America - but rather mixed.

So there are the three patterns of distribution - Euro-American, in which tribal Indians persist in a population predominantly European; Indo-American, in which the great body of the population is Indian, with the European minority in control, and of course with a considerable mixed population too; and Mestizo-American, in which the great body of people and also the elite are mixed European and Indian - and of course African - and there are minority groups of Indians, as in Euro-America.

The only place where Indians have substantially disappeared is in the Caribbean area, largely because they received the brunt of the first exploitation before new laws for the protection of Indians were promulgated in the middle 16th century. Whether the Indians will inevitably disappear in Euro-America and in Mestizo-America we cannot say. Service seems to think they are on the way out - indeed he has prematurely counted out over a million of them. None of us can be prophets, but judging by the persistence of Indian groups here after 450 years of shattering experiences, it seems reasonable to argue that they have proved their resilience, and are more likely than not now to maintain their communities and societies.

The situation in Indo-America is much more complex, and for our purposes more important. What shall we say is the place of the Indians in Peru, or Bolivia, or Guatemala, and what will be their future?

Here the Indians reorganized their lives shortly after the Conquest reinterpreting and incorporating many elements of European culture into their own cultures. In turn, they became in some degree part of the colonial system. A new integration thus established - and most of the changes occurred very soon after the Conquest - the Indian cultures have persisted. Now a new set of influences - roads, industries, radios and modern ideas - impinge upon them.

Many persons assume that they will now change their ways, and become like us. I am inclined strongly to doubt this. Two sets of culture streams, the Indian and the European, have converged here. In 450 years each has adopted some of the ways of the other; but both continue to exist. There is a continuing process of Indians leaving their Indian communities and becoming part of the national culture in whatever country they live. But modern medicine reduces the death rate, and it seems very likely that the distinctive Indian societies will grow faster than they lose adherents, so that Indian communities and cultures will actually increase in numbers. To assume that there will ever be a single Guatemalan or Peruvian culture is therefore dangerous. But even if the merging should eventually occur, as the Norman and the Saxon elements eventually merged in Britain, it would be foolhardy to predict what the eventual mixture would contain. To suppose that out of the present heterogeneity will come a single homogeneous Latin American culture is only possible if one assumes that the fairly homogeneous European is dominant over the much more heterogeneous Indian. I suppose that the Normans of the 12th Century thought that their culture, too, would predominate in England. They were wrong. What reason is there to trust our own vanity more?

FOOTNOTES

1. Reprinted from Civilizations, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1955) by permission of the editors and the author. The article was first read as a paper to a study conference "concerning the relevance of the Christian mission to the culture of Latin America" at the Kennedy School of Missions, May 26-28, 1955.

2. See especially the following general summaries:
For South America: Julian H. Stewart, Handbook of South American Indians (6 volumes, with a 7th, a general index, in preparation) Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1946.
For Mesoamerica: Sol Tax, ed., Heritage of Conquest, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1952.
For the Southwest: a special issue of the American Anthropologist, August, 1954.
On Latin America in general: another special issue of the American Anthropologist, June 1955.

3. Elman R. Service, "Indian-European Relations in Colonial Latin America." American Anthropologist, v. 57, No. 3, part 1, June 1955, pp. 411-425.

EDITORIAL REMARKS

We Need Articles

We would like to publish two good articles in each issue of Practical Anthropology. Since the Interim Editor took over, however, he has had to "scrounge" for even one. If the magazine is going to continue to be of value to its subscribers we need more material. We also need new voices. Some of the members of the editorial committee, because of their sense of responsibility to the project, have made what may seem to be a disproportionate contribution.

One of our difficulties is the fact that there are so very few professionally trained "Christian students of anthropology," and many of these are young and inexperienced, feeling the need for some field experience to test out their training and the intellectual formulations they have been trying to make. They are, furthermore, very busy people, with heavy teaching or research or mission responsibilities. We appeal to them, however, to contribute regularly to the magazine. We wish that each of them would send in at least an article a year.

Another of our difficulties is that readers who are not professionally trained feel incompetent to write for PA. Let the missionaries in particular remember, however, that through their contact with other cultures they may have gained valuable insights that the rest of us need. They have dealt in a practical way with communication across cultural boundaries, with acculturation in process, with innovations within a cultural tradition. If they would send in articles the editors would be most delighted to work with them to slant the material to the purposes and to the readers of PA.

Sometimes graduate students write for their courses papers which should be adapted for the readers of PA. We would appreciate it very much if they would send us copies of such papers, and we could make suggestions for

their modification into articles suitable for the magazine.

There is a kind of article which is not too difficult to prepare, but of which we have seen very little in PA. It is the "how to" type of article. Most of our readers are not technically trained, and those of us who are would profit by the experience of others. How do you get genealogical information and study it in terms of interpersonal relations? How do you find out the channels of communication in a society? How do new ideas spread? How can you work up a useful file of cultural information, and what type of cultural information is most pertinent for the missionary to concentrate on? How could a missionary proceed to make a significant hobby out of the systematic study of the people around him? How do you encourage the growth of a "responsible Christianity" rather than dominate a struggling church? Each of these problems is worth an article, and so are scores of others. These reflect the Interim Editor's missionary interests but non-missionary papers are just as welcome.

PA is off to a good start. More than 325 of you have placed your confidence in it to the extent of a subscription. Some of you have subscribed for five years in advance. Won't you take this plea for articles seriously?

W.A.S.

REVIEW

Shadows in the Sun. Chad Oliver. New York: Ballantine Books. 1954. 152 pp. Paperbound $.35, Hardbound $2.00.

Although this book is one of the type referred to as science fiction, one need not be devoted to that type of literature to appreciate and enjoy Shadows in the Sun. The author received an M.A. in anthropology from UCLA where he was a classmate of the reviewer, and at present is Instructor of Anthropology at the University of Texas.

It may be said that this is a story of a man who is the victim of an acculturation situation. In broad outline it may possibly be repetition of what has happened to "primitives" throughout the world as a result of their introduction to modern civilization. There is one major difference--the "savage" in this account is Paul Ellery, Ph.D. in anthropology.

Ellery was doing a community study of a small town in Texas when he realized that something was radically wrong--the town was too typical with no one deviating from the norm. Investigation revealed that although Jefferson Springs had been continuously occupied for one hundred thirty-two years no one of the population of six thousand had lived there for more than fifteen years. The original population had been completely replaced. Through intense investigation and a series of circumstances Ellery learned that these people were colonists from other earth-type planets which had become too crowded to contain them.

The galaxies from which these colonists had come were eons ahead of the earth in development, and this was reflected in their colonial policies.

> First of all, the primitive planet must not be aware that it had been colonized, for that would destroy initiative and rob whole worlds of their futures.

> Secondly, the natives could not be harmed in any way...Finally, there was a limit to the percentage of a planet which could be colonized. This percentage varied with the planet, but in no case could it exceed fifteen percent. (pp. 41-42)

Because he seemed to be an extremely intelligent person (for an aborigine) Ellery was offered the opportunity to receive training away from earth, after first proving himself by living and working with the colonists in Jefferson Springs. He felt that there was no alternative since life on earth was meaningless when other peoples had long since attained scientific and intellectual levels for which he and his colleagues were just beginning to reach. Caught between two cultures, Ellery felt that his own would never again have meaning for him, and yet he knew that he did not fit into the new one.

Shadows in the Sun develops the conflict which this situation caused in Ellery's mind and the decisions which he was forced to make concerning the validity of his own culture compared to one which was so much farther advanced. His final decision and the factors which contributed to it are very thought-provoking.

Throughout the book there are many references to anthropological theory, as well as to anthropologists, among whom are Childe, Linton, White, Malinowski, Redfield, Powdermaker and Kluckhohn.

Claude E. Stipe

Fort Wayne Bible College
Fort Wayne, Indiana

NOTES AND NEWS

Taylor in Mexico

Robert Taylor, the editor of Practical Anthropology since its inception, is beginning field research near Oaxaca, Mexico. He plans to reside in an Indian village for several months in order to conduct research on cultural change. Taylor plans to make an ethnographic study of a particular community and attempt to assess the cultural, personal and other factors which bear on the manner in which people accept or reject new cultural ideas. Cases in which individuals are presented with alien cultural ideas will be described and analyzed.

Taylor holds a B. S. from Wheaton College (Illinois) and an M. S. from the University of Oregon where he has also successfully completed the Ph. D. preliminary examinations, all in the field of anthropology. He was Instructor of Anthropology at Wheaton College from 1951-1954. The field research in Mexico will be the basis for his doctoral dissertation.

Reyburns Leave for Africa

William and Marie Reyburn sailed from Marseille on the 6th of July and arrived in the French Cameroun on the 23rd. They had completed a five month period of language study in France after conducting a pilot ethnolinguistic survey on the east coast of Nicaragua and Honduras for the American Bible Society. The Reyburns plan to spend three years in the Cameroun in special linguistic work for the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the USA.

Larsons Prepare Moni Materials

Gordon and Mildred Larson, linguistically trained missionaries with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Netherlands New Guinea have recently completed Twelve Lessons in Moni and Dictionary Moni-English.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More on the Comparative Method

Mr. Nickerson's "caution that anthropologists have by and large discarded the major premises of the historically defined 'comparative method,'" (P.A., vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 41-2) is well taken. However, in his criticism of my claim that the comparative method is "one of anthropology's greatest assets," he seems to be unaware of its widespread use in current and recent literature.

For example, Beals and Hoijer (An Introduction to Anthropology, 1953, p.6) point out that "the anthropologist must substitute [for the experimental approach] the comparative method." William L. Thomas, Jr. (editor, Current Anthropology, 1955, p. 185) speaks of "the anthropologist's comparative method." Ralph Piddington (An Introduction to Social Anthropology, 1950, p. 22) discusses "The Classification of Cultures and the Comparative Method." And E. H. Ackerknecht devotes a whole essay to the values of "The Comparative Method in Anthropology." (R. F. Spencer, ed., Method and Perspective in Anthropology, Papers in honor of Wilson D. Wallis, 1954.)

The modern significance of the comparative method in social anthropology as a methodological consideration was deemed sufficient for the Wenner-Gren Foundation to devote a study conference to it in February of 1953, which was written up in the American Anthropologist of that year.

Indeed the method in its present-day context has its own critics who would modify terminology and method alike, quite as definitely, but not so fundamentally, as Boas criticised the comparative method as employed by Frazer and Tyler. See, for example, Oscar Lewis' extensive critique, "Comparisons in Cultural Anthropology" in Current Anthropology.

Of course, Mr. Nickerson's criticisms are strictly terminological, and we would agree on the theoretical considerations involved.

Perhaps Kroeber's comment on Ackerknecht's essay in the Wallis volume is to the point: "He sees the comparative method as something that must and will be revived. I would say that it has never gone out; it has only changed its tactic."

James O. Buswell, III
Wheaton College
Wheaton, Illinois

Anthropology and Mission Work

The application of anthropology to our mission work among the Toba Indians I consider of inestimable and eternal value. My whole outlook on life has been considerably changed through the help which Dr. and Mrs. Reyburn brought to this mission. In connection with that, it is a privilege to receive Practical Anthropology and thereby increase my knowledge of what is going on in this field.

...Our mission board has been amazingly liberal in allowing us practically free rein in following our convictions here in the Chaco. I insist that it must be that way, or else all our talk about the indigenous church is just self-deception. If we really believe we should be founders of indigenous churches, we dare not entertain any illusions as to the form they will take.

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